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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Londoners urged to step up their water conservation efforts - Level 2 "Low Water Advisory" now in effect

Limited rainfall - combined with warmer, drier weather this past season - is having a serious impact on the water bodies of Southwestern Ontario. Levels of lakes and rivers are lower by as much as 20 per cent and, for smaller components of our watershed system, the visible effects are marked. For example, some creeks beds are drying out and there are instances of irrigation ponds reduced to puddles.

Under the guidelines of the Ontario Water Low Water Response Plan, Water Advisories are in effect throughout most of the region. "To meet the advisory targets of reduced water use, municipalities need the support of their residents in conserving water," explains Pat McNally, the City's Water, Environment and Customer Relations Director.

"Londoners continued cooperation in following the odd/even day water restrictions is obviously a key conservation measure. However, at a Level 2 Advisory, we encourage everyone who is not already doing so to increase their water conservation efforts both indoors and out. Indoors we should concentrate on not wasting water by taking shorter showers and wash only full loads of laundry and dishes. Outdoors we should keep watering down to essential needs only - trees, shrubs and newly planted sod that must have water to survive. You can let your established lawn go into dormancy because it can recover from a dry period."

"Another major way residents can help is to adopt practices that make the most effective use of their water," says McNally. "For example, there is less evaporation loss if you water your garden in the early morning when temperatures and wind speeds are lowest." Other water smart habits for outside include:

- using a bucket and cloth rather than a hose to wash your car and garden furniture
- collecting available rainwater in a rain barrel for yard use
- saving any excess water from flushing pipes to use on house and garden plants

The City's own conservation efforts include water use efficiencies in its park and golf course maintenance that range from the timing and duration of watering schedules to slowing down evaporation by putting mulch around trees and plants. A variety of initiatives are also in place to reduce irrigation needs such as the use of compost on playing fields to create less water dependent turf.

Following the voluntary responses outlined for municipalities and conservation authorities, the Level 2 water reduction target is 20 per cent. This will ease the pressure on the regional water system including London's own Lake Huron and Elgin sources which have seen some record consumption patterns this summer.

The hope is that conservation in combination with adequate rainfall will allow a sufficient supply of drinking water to the areas outside the City that rely on groundwater sources. "Our water resources are interrelated and a shared resource," says McNally. "The success of all municipalities in reducing water consumption not only in Advisory situations but also on a year-round basis benefits the entire region in terms of the immediate and long-term drinking water supplies and the well-being of our communities."